HOME LIGHTS AND HOME SHADOWS.

"What a quiet man Mr. Mason is, and what nice children he has; I never hear any noise when I go there."

What strange notions people have of nice, quiet people, thought I, as I heard the foregoing observation from a man, whose kindly disposition and cheerful face were a perfect preventive of the quiet, nice order that reigned in Mr. Mason's house. When he came home, the cheerful smile on his lip, the kind inquiry, or some pleasantly related piece of news, set all the lips to smiling and all the tongues to talking around his table, and the very noise he seemed to have deprecated, was the music to which his life was happily gliding on, of which he himself was the key-note —a perfect contrast to the gloomy order that reigned in the house of the quiet Mr. Mason.

I will give you a short sketch of this gentleman. He was, in the estimation of the world, and his own, also, one of the best of men. By careful industry, he had acquired some property, among which was a nice dwelling, wherein his mother, himself, and only sister lived. As his means increased, he furnished it very nicely. His mother was very industrious, and his sister very tasty; and many inventions of their needles gave an air of elegance, to what, in other hands, would have appeared plain. In the course of time, the mother died. I forgot to say, that, although Mr. Mason was always spoken of as one of the best of sons and brothers, the family always appeared uneasy until his opinion of what they may have done, was known. When it was asked if he did not disapprove, they inferred it pleased him, for "he was one that never praised." "It will do well enough," was the warmest encomium he ever used. The brother and sister were left together. Poor girl! her mother had been her only companion—her brother had never seemed to care for society. Of a warm, cheerful temper, and with ardent affections, her whole heart now turned to her brother; and he, tender from grief for the loss of his mother, seemed to throw off for a awhile, that cold quietness, that is more depressing to an affectionate disposition than active unkindness. When he came home, he would tell her of some of the doings of the world in which he mixed, and of which she only knew the exterior. Again the color came to her cheek, and her buoyant laugh had something like the merry ring it used to have in her mother's lifetime. Occasionally it appeared to startle her brother; but he thought of the many hours she had been alone, and he could not find it in his heart to reprove her.

But soon the old habit of fault-finding returned. Anything that did not exactly suit him, was sure to render him cold and silent; and often a meal passed without anything but monosyllables. If she would try to entertain him with any little incident that came under her observation, "he took no interest in such trifles." Her joyous laugh was repressed with the observation—"That it was too boisterous, the neighbors would hear her." The house was soon quiet enough after that. Alone, without any one to speak to, while her brother was at his business, you would not have known when he was home, from any signs of life that were about the house.

I loved Betty Mason, and could not help pitying the orphan girl, for I knew how truly her mother had been "all the world to her;" and often took my sewing and went in to sit with her. I knew she was devotedly attached to her brother, and therefore did not think it strange she should be so anxious that everything she did should please him. But one thing puzzled me, and that was, that she appeared to be far more cheerful for two or three months after her mother's death, than afterwards. She appeared more depressed, and complained more of her loss, when from the time that had elapsed, she would have become reconciled to it. I soon penetrated the secret, for I found, that in her brother's presence she was not the same impulsive, warm being, but acted with a precision and quietness that was not natural to her character; and, when on the plea that she thought she ought not be a burden to her brother, she told me she was going to accept a situation in a fine school, I admired the good sense and independence of my friend.

I asked her brother what he thought of Betty's plan. He said he "saw no necessity for her doing anything for a living: but she was her own mistress; she could do what she pleased." My cheeks burned at the cold indifference of this speech. I knew that with one quarter the physical, and only healthful mental exertion, she was going to obtain a genteel independence. She would be absent from home from Monday till Friday. She left the house in the charge of a good servant, and once a week gave it a good regulating. She soon recovered the tone of her spirits; and her brother, who really missed her presence, was too glad of her weekly return, to find fault with her now buoyant spirits, for, like most persons of a peevish, fault-finding disposition, he was rather wavering; and her decision of character, now fully developed by intercourse with the world,

and a sense of independence, overruled his foolish notions, and compelled him to be happier than he ever was.

But such a girl as Betty Mason was not born to "blush unseen;" and a fine man of congenial character sought and won her. George Edgar it was, who, at the beginning of our story, had just returned from a visit to his quiet brother-in-law's, and was so much admiring the quietness of his household.

After Betty's marriage, Edward Mason had married a gentle, timid girl, and thought he would be very happy: but his querulous disposition, and the habit of irritability at the slightest thing that did not please him; and worse than all, omitting to commend anything, no matter how great an effort had been made by his wife to consult his taste and conform to his wishes, depressed the timid creature by his side into ill-health. His children were sickly, quiet little things, without energy enough for a hearty laugh or health-giving romp; and he was constantly fretting about doctor's bills and medicine, and telling his friends how much more fortunate they were, than he had been with his children: never suspecting that he poisoned the spring of his own happiness at the source.

Why did he not show a cheerful face to his wife and warm her heart with a sense of duty fulfilled, instead of grudging the slightest word of praise? Why did he repress the joyous laugh of childhood, and make his house so quiet and dull, that one always felt, on leaving, as if just escaped from a sick chamber.

O, give me the man that will smile a warm, genial, heartfelt-smile when I please him, even though he frown when I don't; and keep me far from the one that "will never praise."